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**Decisive Point, Center of Gravity or Something Else: The effort to
ascertain the role of the affected populace in COIN Operations.**

By

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**A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the
requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.**

**The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily
endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.**

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Abstract

In the past several years, there has been resurgence in the study of Operational Art in order to prepare our forces to face the dynamic changes seen in warfare since the end of the Cold War. The theories of Clausewitz have been especially popular as leaders search to maximize the effectiveness of limited resources and personnel in a growing realm of global conflict. A central tenet of Clausewitz's teachings is the concept of "Center of Gravity." This concept is meant to aid the commander focus his resources on areas where maximum results may be best realized. This focus will theoretically cause serious degradation of enemy forces and speed victory. While this approach may realize good success through proper application in a conventional fight where large formations or readily apparent objectives are the norm, when the application is attempted in a Counter Insurgency setting, especially at the operational level, the process can be frustrating and the results unclear. This paper argues that operational commanders need not look further than the populace affected by the insurgency in his search to most directly influence the insurgent forces' abilities.

INTRODUCTION

...frankly, the battlefield isn't necessarily a field anymore. It's in the minds of the people.ⁱ

In the current national security environment, numerous insurgencies are taking place at any one time. While it is true that the underlying reasons for these insurgencies are many, they all have at least one thing in common. They involve populaces that are deeply affected by the actions of the insurgents and counter-insurgents struggling for control. Conventional wars are also fought for numerous motivations and often seem to be moderately organized chaos, but they still tend to reflect certain principles, which if understood and leveraged properly, accord one belligerent advantages over the other. The counterinsurgency context is similar. Specifically, one enduring principle concerns Carl von Clausewitz's Center of Gravity theory. While many analysts believe that the COG theory is applicable to a counter insurgency, there is significant disagreement on the proper place of the affected populace within that theory. Therefore, this paper seeks to illustrate why the populace should be considered the Operational Center of Gravity upon which counter insurgent forces should focus the majority of their efforts in order to gain maximum positive effect with their often-limited resources.

The opening epigraph is part of Admiral Mike Mullen's remarks in an address at Kansas State University's Langdon Lecture Series. It articulates a guiding principle of counter insurgency operations. Some believe that the minds of which he speaks are those of the insurgents themselves. They may be correct in certain instances. However, it can also be argued that winning the minds of the affected populace is just as important, if not more so, in order to effect the environmental changes required to defeat the insurgents, and restore either the status quo ante bellum or an improved situation.

Counter insurgency (COIN) campaigns are drastically different in many ways from conventional, force-on-force campaigns. The required skill sets are dissimilar, requiring the counter insurgent forces to be masters of more than just kinetic force application against targets. As history has shown, massive infantry or armor formations employing conventional tactics, techniques, and procedures taught in doctrinal publications clearly just do not work in most COIN situations.

Nonetheless, there are similarities because at its root, a conflict by any name is a conflict all the same. In conflict, two (or more) belligerent forces engage in violent struggle to achieve end states that oppose one another. The contextual differences concern the application of power and the focus of that applied power. This is the core of operational art - determining the most effective and efficient use of available forces and corresponding resources to achieve clearly defined objectives.ⁱⁱ Central to the practice of operational art lies the determination of these relevant objectives at all levels of war and the application of Clausewitz's tenets concerning the Center of Gravity (COG).ⁱⁱⁱ It is here that the differences between COIN and conventional campaigns really begin to appear. In a conventional fight, relatively straightforward objectives can be readily identified, making it almost routine to identify the corresponding COGs. This is not the case in COIN. In a COIN fight, tactical kinetic objectives may be quickly identified, enabling sound and timely planning at the tactical level. However, when trying to establish the strategic and operational objectives upon which the tactical objectives should be based, the lines between the two levels may quickly blur. Identifying the corresponding COGs can be tough. As with a conventional fight, where results at the tactical and operational levels empower strategic decision-making, so it is with a COIN fight. This makes it imperative that the operational commander best

employ available ways and means in his efforts to defeat insurgent forces in a manner that satisfies all campaign levels.

Many commanders and planners automatically assume that the affected populace is the strategic center of gravity (SCOG) in COIN campaigns. This automatic assumption is dangerous. Just as a wise commander knows that there is no ‘cookie cutter’ approach to COG derivation in a conventional fight, this is just as true, if not more so, in a COIN fight. The operational commander must employ careful problem framing and mission analysis, especially concerning the population, whose role varies not only from conflict to conflict but also within the theater of operations itself. Thus, the COIN commander and planners should consider the affected population to be the insurgency’s Operational Center of Gravity (OCOG). By correctly identifying the role that the OCOG populace fulfills, the COIN operational commander is best able to apply his always-limited resources to best effect.

Insurgency as a wicked problem

Much like its conventional counterpart, a counterinsurgency is a wicked problem and must be addressed as such through mission analysis and problem framing. In conventional operations, planners -- especially Army and Marine Corps -- seek established doctrine to identify and bound the problem, and propose feasible solutions. This is not always possible in the COIN realm. COIN scenarios fit the definition of a wicked problem because they are non-linear, interactively complex, and prone to small inputs causing drastic outcome changes.^{iv}

An insurgency’s nature and scope, along with the three attributes mentioned above, make it difficult to identify simple doctrinal solutions. This type of fight often demands that leaders seek to establish a ‘good enough’ solution based on maintaining an acceptable condition in a steady state. Insurgency is ‘too wicked’ to be doctrinal and there are no by-the-book answers. Due to the

inherent complexities of a COIN campaign, it is perhaps even more wicked than a conventional campaign if possible.

In the context of such an extremely complex and wicked problem, how must the operational commander approach the most important facet of the COIN campaign -- the population directly affected by the insurgency? In a conventional fight, the primary focus is upon the opposing belligerent in the context of one's own objective(s). In COIN, the population upon which the campaign is centered -- as insurgent forces struggle to gain control of the legitimate government -- becomes the belligerents' principal point of concentration. Struggle for control of the affected population empowers the population itself to take on several roles. These roles vary and each contributes to the scope of the wicked problem (insurgency) itself as the affected population works with or against each belligerent.

Roles of an affected populace

From the perspective of the COIN operational commander, there are four roles that the affected population may fall into: Perpetrator, Enabler, Cooperative Adversary (of the insurgent forces) or Victim (of the insurgent forces). It is possible for the affected population to shift roles over time or fulfill multiple roles simultaneously due to changing conditions in the operating environment. Therefore, COIN commanders at all levels must understand thoroughly the environment in which they operate. Part of this understanding is to comprehend accurately an affected situation and the role(s) it fulfills at any given time. This comprehension enables the commander to determine the best way to prosecute the COIN fight. While non-doctrinal in nature, the four role descriptors serve a useful purpose in helping the operational commander discern the populace role he faces at any given point.

The two extremes of the continuum would be Perpetrator and Victim. As a Perpetrator, it the populace itself is driving the insurgency for a variety of reasons, perhaps to effect regime change or attain other specific political goals. No matter the reason, the affected populace is the genesis of the insurgency and sustains it. Conversely, the affected populace may serve as a Victim of an insurgency. This occurs when the populace does not necessarily support the aims of the insurgency but is subject to the violence and unrest brought on by the insurgent's fight against the legitimate government yet unable or unwilling to mount any defense at all. The line between the two extremes, Perpetrator and Victim, is very distinct. In the Victim role, the affected population is at the mercy of the insurgents, who are pursuing objectives that most likely do not benefit the affected population at all, making it simply a pawn in the process. Whether the populace will benefit in the end by the insurgents' success is irrelevant. Conversely, the affected population in Perpetrator role reflects an insurgency by, for, and of the people; for the most part, the affected population solidly supports insurgent leaders and actions. This is perhaps the most dangerous situation that a COIN commander can face.

The two types in between -- Cooperative Adversary to the insurgent forces and Enabler -- very much complicate the matter. The term 'cooperative adversary' (CA) traditionally describes a belligerent in any context that has a tough time mounting a capable defense against another belligerent. While not necessarily a belligerent, an affected population could be considered a CA when its members struggle against the insurgents but are unable to mount, at least initially, any sort of self-defense that repels the insurgents and refutes its objectives. It is easy to surmise that within the context of COIN, a Victim and Cooperative Adversary is perhaps one and the same.

The Enabler is easier to understand. It is the affected population that sits on the fence waiting to see what will happen or debating which belligerent would be in its best interests to

support. The Enabler may or may not prevent of the two belligerents from achieving goals and objectives, and may/may not take direct action to support the side it thinks will win. From the belligerents' standpoint, such support is neither guaranteed nor likely to be more than fleeting.^v

Comprehending a populace's essential nature and situational role in an insurgency climate helps the COIN commander understand the overall wicked problem, properly frame it, and devise an effective campaign to deal with it. These actions are imperative considering the populace's great value to both the insurgents and counterinsurgents.

The populace is more than a decisive point

There are many varied concepts concerning how to best address the affected populace in the COIN realm. In his article "We the People Are Not the Center of Gravity in an Insurgency," LTC Mark Krieger uses the term 'Decisive Point' to describe the affected population and its role.^{vi} This idea is misleading. A 'Decisive Point' (DP), as discussed by Colonel David Witty in a recent National Defense University article, is mostly used at the tactical level to describe a location, event, factor, behavior, or function that, when successfully attacked, yields a marked advantage over an opponent.^{vii} Witty's definition is at odds with Krieger's point of view as Witty considers actions or events to be a DP as opposed to Krieger who considers the entire mass of population to be the DP.

As the DP concept is most commonly applied at the tactical level in a conventional conflict, COIN related DPs should be no different. Tactical level DPs must be developed and used to influence the fight from the lowest tactical levels reaching up to the foggy line between the tactical and operational levels. In his article, "The Hard Choice: Decisive Points in Counterinsurgency" CPT Brandon Anderson relates that conventional conflict DPs typically relate to controlling the terrain [boots on ground] or destroying the enemy. He argues that this focus on

primarily killing the enemy or simply controlling terrain can and, if not managed, will lead to a ‘search and destroy’ mindset that can lead to the creation of more insurgents rather than their reduction in numbers.^{viii} As COIN and conventional fights differ, so must the natures of the DPs in each context. As further discussed in the Anderson article, COIN related decision points

... should include quantifiable measures of influence and success in building the government’s legitimacy with its people and successfully transitioning authority to its own security forces as well as traditional measures of success.^{ix}

Krieger contradicts himself as he describes the affected population as more than just a decisive point when he states later in his article, “... they [the affected population] provide critical resources such as recruits, leaders, logistical supply lines and information” to the insurgency.^x Drawing upon the affected population for recruits, leaders, supplies, and information suggests that it should be considered an insurgent critical strength required to achieve the operational objectives underwriting the insurgency’s strategic endstate rather than simply a decisive point.

Objectives in terms of COIN

Objectives are entities that a commander must achieve in order to attain an over-arching desired end state. Objectives exist at all levels of war and must be identified accurately, especially at the strategic and operational levels, in order to win campaigns and major operations, not just battles and engagements. In conventional conflict, objectives are usually readily apparent and physically tangible, fitting succinctly into campaigns to achieve desired end states.

In COIN this is not always the case. Objectives are not just goals of kinetic operations that capture enemy forces or invest critical physical territory. The most important and productive objectives usually reside in development, governance, or security, where the results of counterinsurgent actions to achieve the objectives may not be readily evident at first. While conventional objectives are geared more to eliminate enemy forces and degrade their abilities to

fight, COIN objectives are more about building capacity for governance, self-sustainment, and influencing the will of the people. This is particularly true at the operational level. In the COIN context, what are the right objectives? Especially in the early stages, operational commanders will employ kinetic operations to kill or capture unregenerate insurgents. However, as the COIN campaign develops further, operational commanders must judiciously balance kinetic with non-kinetic operations because heavy-handed tactics and indiscriminate fires can quickly turn neutral population centers into insurgent recruiting offices.^{xi}

The common thread between conventional and COIN conflicts is that operational objectives must be those that best support attainment of higher-level objectives and ultimately the strategic desired end state. In a COIN fight, activities that mostly involve chasing teenage illiterates around the countryside, indiscriminately kicking in doors, and violating Pashtun honor codes by searching women and private property are not appropriate to the nature of a COIN campaign and work against any objectives that may be able to support and achieve the desired strategic end state.

COG in the COIN fight

According to Clausewitz, a center of gravity in military sense is the “hub of all power and movement on which everything depends . . . the point at which all our energies should be directed” and is “the ultimate source of enemy strength that must be traced back to the fewest sources and ideally to one alone” where the “mass is concentrated most densely.”^{xii} In Clausewitz’s writing, he bases his COG theory on the mechanical center of gravity principle. The translation of this principle from physics to military planning and theory can be tough, but the basic premise is applicable. In the physical world, one can dislodge an animate object from its position or process by influencing a physical point within its structure, causing the object to act

outside its 'norm.' Theoretically, one can do the same (upset the object's ability to function) with a mass of forces (such as an army) by striking (or otherwise manipulating) the point that is central to its ability to function -- be it physical or otherwise.

Clausewitz's theory of using an abstract center of gravity to focus an attack upon an enemy force has gained U.S. military planning prominence in the years since Vietnam. Ideally, COG helps the commander focus limited resources upon the most advantageous position or situation in order to maximize the likelihood of achieving military and non-military objectives. The existence of a COG, regardless of level, is tied to a valid objective that must be attained at a given point in time.

Each U.S. Military Service has specific views of what should or should not be considered a center of gravity. The definition of COG varies among the Services and within joint doctrine itself. Joint Publication (JP) 1-02 defines COG as "those characteristics, capabilities or localities from which a military force derives its freedom of action, physical strength or will to fight" while JP 3-0 describes it as "the source of power that provides moral or physical strength, freedom of action, or will to act." Unfortunately, the lack of agreement between the services along with the lack of agreement at the joint level itself on such an essential definition results in too-diluted joint doctrine. It is possible that this occurs because of inherent differences in each Service's prescribed roles and functions. Regardless of definitional differences, there is a constant theme – enemy COG provides enemy freedom of action.

The issue is further complicated as COGs must be identified at both the strategic and operational levels. What are the differences between the two? The JP gives suggestions as to what a strategic or operational level COG may be:

At the strategic level, a COG might be a military force, an alliance, a political or military

leader, a set of critical capabilities or functions, or national will. At the operational level a COG often is associated with the adversary's military capabilities - such as a powerful element of the armed forces - but could include other capabilities in the operational environment associated with the adversary's political, economic, social, information, and infrastructure systems.^{xiii}

Are there really differences between the levels? Can the objectives be so closely linked that the line is blurred beyond distinction? Perhaps it is not even necessary to do so in some cases as the manipulation of the OCOG will have the desired effect on the strategic levels themselves.

As with any regulation or publication, the commander must ultimately decide on the interpretation that best fits the situation and craft required decisions accordingly.

The affected populace as the OCOG

The affected population manifests itself several ways in the OCOG role. As discussed above, while there are differing COG definitions, there are several commonalities among them. The definitions speak of 'physical or moral strength' and 'freedom of action,' and that affecting it will have 'the most decisive impact' on an enemy. The affected population meets those criteria in several ways.

First, the affected population offers the most direct opportunity in which to strike and eventually destroy insurgent forces above the tactical level. By their nature, insurgent forces fight in a hit and run manner, using small, loosely affiliated operating cells. These cells rarely present well-defined target profiles that, if attacked successfully, would degrade or destroy the insurgent's overall ability to conduct operations. Just as the physical destruction of a conventional enemy fighting force may be necessary, COIN force reduction of violence-capable insurgents is also necessary. Physical annihilation of insurgent forces is usually impossible because they rarely present themselves in such a target posture. This is where the affected population is best utilized. Reduction and ultimate elimination of insurgent violence potential must take place via presenting

viable alternatives to the populace in the realms of governance, security, and economic support. Emplacing well-designed programs in that vein will eventually dry up insurgent support as populace members begin to realize that they have far more to gain through cooperation with the counterinsurgency than with the insurgents, whose ends may not be beneficial to the populace.

The affected population can serve as an insurgent critical strength because it provides resources that sustain insurgent operations and legitimacy necessary for the insurgents to achieve strategic objectives of controlling the national government. Legitimate governance requires the will of the people as legitimacy to govern is a condition based on the justness of the government's actions. Accordingly, legitimacy can only be bestowed by the populace.^{xiv} Gaining and maintaining legitimacy is usually the most critical of all strengths an insurgency requires and is therefore its strategic COG. COIN forces that work closely with the incumbent government and affected population to improve that government's legitimacy, whether at the local, regional, tribal, or national levels, will remove a major pillar of insurgency advantage by diminishing the validity of its cause. Reduced insurgent credibility should result in reduced financial support, sustainment sources, and recruiting opportunities while simultaneously striking at the insurgency's true Strategic COG.

The COIN operational commander has the ability to influence the affected populace kinetically or non-kinetically. Whether enabling regional or national elections, establishing, training, equipping, and facilitating local security elements (police or citizen's watch type element, such as the Sons of Iraq), or directly providing for the security of the populace within the operational environment, the operational commander has significant opportunities to influence the affected population.

The affected population has the greatest potential to influence insurgency viability (i.e., survival potential). As Frank Kitson discusses in his *Low Intensity Operations*, Mao's classic literature labels the affected population as the 'ocean' in which insurgent 'fish' swim.^{xv} This 'ocean' is the point of confluence where insurgent gravitational points come together.^{xvi} Further, armed forces -- whether national security or insurgents -- have a certain unity that allows them to operate and if this "interdependence" or "connectivity" is affected, the entire force is affected.^{xvii} For insurgents, connectivity and unity rely on the affected population. Thus, COIN operational commanders who gain influence with the affected population have the greatest ability to deny the 'ocean' to the enemy 'fish.'

Merely achieving the objective of 'winning' affected population support is not enough -- the population must be empowered to act of its own accord and in ways supportive of COIN efforts to achieve the operational objectives that support desired end state attainment.

Thorough mission analysis and problem framing enable the commander to identify centers of gravity accurately. COGs must be linked to their respective objectives. An affected population could be considered an insurgent OCOG because direct/indirect reduction of its support to insurgents directly influences attainment of COIN operational objectives. Thus, if the operational commander has designed an achievable operational scheme/idea with appropriate operational objectives, successful execution of this scheme will lead to attainment of strategic objectives and the desired endstate.

An OCOG facilitates achievement of the operational objective that links the tactical level to the strategic. For an insurgency, the operational objectives that serve insurgent strategic objectives and desired end state are centered on the population itself, not its leadership or ideology. According to LTC Chris North

“One has only to look to the [JP 3-0] definition of COG to realize that the control of the population and resources (PRC) is ‘the source of power that provides moral or physical strength, freedom of action, or will to act.’ ALL belligerent sides pursue the PRC COG at the operational level of war.”^{xviii}

For the COIN commander, controlling the population and resources means persuading the populace to support the government; that is done by making a sound plan at the operational level and working the plan diligently.^{xix}

The bottom line is that while there may not be massed insurgent forces available for the COIN forces to target kinetically, there is still a “touchable” OCOG available to the operational commander -- the populace itself. The affected population is the primary source of the insurgent force’s moral and physical strength. Without affected population support, whether freely given or coerced, the insurgent forces cannot function indefinitely. Given viable alternatives, it is likely that the affected population will turn against the insurgent forces especially if the end state sought by the insurgent forces differs radically from that which the affected population’s desires. Ultimately, the insurgent force’s SCOG is its legitimacy. To ensure that this legitimacy is sufficiently strong for the insurgency to win, the insurgents need the affected population and the support that they provide. Insufficient affected population support results in the insurgent force’s inability to recruit participants, acquire sustainment, or simply physically survive in the operating environment.

Approach the populace as the OCOG

Rather than viewing the affected population purely as an objective, the operational commander should view the affected population as the opportunity to achieve objectives that will benefit the affected population in the desired end state. Empowering the affected population to participate in attaining objectives that ultimately benefit them has the significant benefit of

offering the affected population practical alternatives to supporting the insurgency. This impedes insurgent resourcing and reconstitution. Given attractive practical alternatives, the affected population should be less inclined to provide the freedom of movement and action that the insurgent forces require in order to operate at their maximum capacity.

The affected population may be considered an operational objective as a stable, productive, well-governed nation-state is usually the desired end state of a counterinsurgency campaign. This type of nation-state is dependent on the populace that resides there which means that its support is the key to achieving that end state. The affected population itself is a critical strength required to obtain that desired strategic end state as it is the source of physical and moral strength, power, and resistance that enables or disallows the insurgent forces to operate at will.

In establishing operational objectives, the COIN operational commander must identify corresponding COGs very judiciously, paying close attention to affected populace as the probable and most likely OCOG. To do this requires understanding of the differences between COIN and conventional conflict objectives. In any campaign, each operational objective has a corresponding COG.^{xx} As COIN objectives are derived through the mission analysis process, almost all of them, tangible or intangible, can only be attained with the support of the affected population. This is simply the nature of COIN – no insurgent fighter jets (usually) or naval battle groups to neutralize. However, winning the support of the affected population will yield vital human intelligence, provides required local troops for security purposes, can enable freedom of maneuver for COIN forces and other intangible advantages necessary for operational success. A valuable litmus test for an enemy OCOG is whether imposing our will on it will lead to the accomplishment of our aims while denying the enemy the accomplishment of his.^{xxi} In this way, the affected population proves itself the true OCOG.

Change the mindset

To understand accurately the role of the affected populace in an insurgency, the operational commander must employ a COIN mindset and thought derivation process, adjusting his operational methods to the existing conditions.^{xxii} For example, the word ‘attack’ is often used when discussing COG theory. In COIN, commanders must disassociate ‘attack’ as just kinetic action and include ‘manipulate’ and ‘affect’ in its meaning. In COIN operations, commanders and planners must identify the best ways to shape populace viewpoint in order to attain the desired endstate. As discussed above, this entails thoroughly understanding the role played by the affected population, realizing that this role may vary from region to region and tribe to tribe across the operational environment. Accurately understanding the populace best enables the operational commander to set realistic, attainable COIN objectives appropriate to the desired strategic endstate.

In dealing with the affected population, the COIN commander must ensure his operational scheme and objectives include developing economic opportunities, infrastructure, governance, and appropriate protection of and security for the affected populace. These considerations cause many to advocate that the affected population is itself an objective. Ideally, insurgent objectives are directly counter to those of the friendly forces, but that is not always true. In the case of the 1950-era Algerian insurgency, or the modern Taliban in some instances, insurgent forces may actually provide competing goods and services in an effort to supplant the legitimate government at all levels. In the short run, this obviously complicates COIN efforts. When insurgents provide goods and services to the population, the insurgents control the affected population’s ability to receive and use the good/service, and may possibly even control the affected population itself. The key is

linking the objective to the OCOG and analyzing the relationship to identify the true weaknesses available for COIN exploitation. In practice, insurgents usually have limited ways and means available to them in their efforts to provide those goods and services for the long term. This in itself can be a critical vulnerability exploitable by COIN to influence the affected population. At the same time, this provides the affected population with a critical strength in that COIN forces can work with the legitimate government to strengthen its support of the local populace.

Developing accurate objectives for governance, development, and security enables the affected population to develop ownership of the process itself and become stakeholders in the product: a functioning government with a working economy that affords the affected population a legitimate means of earning a living in a secure environment. By designing objectives that empower the affected population instead of simply viewing the affected population itself as an objective to be achieved, the COIN commander makes most effective use of the situation.

The COIN operational commander must keep in mind that in the COIN fight, there will most likely not be a readily identifiable physical OCOG that is discernible through the COG derivation process. Accordingly, the examination of the affected populace throughout both the problem framing and COG derivation process is where the commander may best identify avenues of approach that will allow him to best utilize the available resources to directly and indirectly attack the insurgency.

Conclusion

In a simple analysis of a Counter Insurgency conflict, as stated earlier, the strategic objective is more than likely a stable, functioning government legitimately recognized by the international community and the affected populace itself. Operational objectives used to reach this desired endstate could include 1. Defeating the insurgent forces; 2. Training local security forces;

3. Emplacing/repairing required infrastructure; and 4. Empowering the legitimate government. Critical Capabilities would run the gamut from executing kinetic operations to training local workers to recruiting volunteers to serve in all levels of government. Accordingly, there are numerous Critical Requirements that enable the Critical Capabilities to be employed such as: develop intelligence, defend ground lines of communication, maintain relative freedom of maneuver, train local forces etc, etc. A shared commonality of these Critical Requirements, as well as many of those not listed, is that the Affected Populace can and will play a part in the success or failure of each, which would make it, the Affected Populace, a critical requirement in and of itself. In turn, the Affected Populace becomes, for the COIN operational commander, a Critical Strength that allows him to successfully employ the Critical Capabilities needed to attain his operational objectives.

In conclusion, the operational commander must consider the affected populace as the operational center of gravity if they are the surest means to affect the insurgent force. Due to the nature of insurgent warfare, there are very few avenues available to the counter-insurgent in an operational sense. Denying the insurgency the ability to recruit, fund, train and operate freely while simultaneously removing the motivations that it uses to fuel its cause is the best way to defeat the insurgency. The best way to do this is to understand and then work with and through the affected populace in a way that is beneficial to it while furthering counter-insurgent aims.

Notes

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- ⁱ Mullen
ⁱⁱ Lind, 45
ⁱⁱⁱ Handel, 85
^{iv} Greenwood & Hammes
^v The discussion of potential roles of an affected populace is non-doctrinal and based on original thoughts and ideas proposed by the author.
^{vi} Krieger, 99
^{vii} Witty, 100
^{viii} Anderson, 23
^{ix} Ibid, 23
^x Krieger, 100
^{xi} Johnson & Mason, 2
^{xii} Handel, 55
^{xiii} JP 3-0
^{xiv} Vego, vii-20
^{xv} Kitson, 49
^{xvi} Echevarria, 112
^{xvii} Ibid, 112
^{xviii} North, 2
^{xix} Ibid, 2
^{xx} Vego, vii-21
^{xxi} Keppler, 7
^{xxii} Mdunarodna, xx

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